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An attempt to explain several of the principal texts, which are brought forward by those who hold to a Universal Restoration, in support of their system.

AMONG those who profess to believe the Christian religion, there exists quite a difference of opinion, what this religion is. By men, who all profess to be Christians, very different opinions are entertained concerning the character of God, the person and offices of the Mediator, the natural state of man, his duty here, and his prospects in the future world. It is idle to say, that the matters in dispute between the various denominations of Christians are trifling, and of no importance. This may indeed be the case in some instances, but often it is quite otherwise, if the Christian religion itself be of any importance; for the things in which we differ are often the most essential things in the system.

But however great our differences are, we all pretend to be willing to have our sentiments tried by the bible. If we did

not, it would amount to renouncing the Christian religion. The apostle Peter speaks of such a thing as *wresting* the scriptures, which is turning them out of their natural course, and making them speak a meaning, which the Spirit of truth did not intend. We know that the father of lies made such a use of scripture when he tempted the Son of God, and it is not strange, if, with our corrupt hearts, we thus corrupt the word of truth. It must be wrong therefore to conclude that men *have* scripture on their side, because they *bring* scripture with a view to support their sentiments. Their proofs must be examined in their connection, to see whether they communicate such ideas, as they are said to do. And here I would remark, that there are commonly a few, which may be called *the principal texts*, by which any particular system is supported. Now, if upon a careful examination, it shall be found, that these *principal texts* are wrested, and made to speak a meaning foreign from what they naturally speak, we shall

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have great reason to suspect the truth of that system, which they are brought to establish. It may therefore be an expeditious way of oversetting a false scheme, to expose the perversion which is made of the most material passages of scripture, which are alleged in its support. If upon examining a new house, which had been built with a view to strength as well as beauty, you should find the posts and principal timbers rotten, you would hardly think it needful to examine the studs and braces and smaller timbers, but would take it for granted, that they too were rotten. You would reason thus : Surely if the man could have found any good, sound timber, he would not have had rotten posts and beams. If, for example, it could be found (which we presume it cannot) that those who believe in the *total depravity* of human nature, have entirely misunderstood and perverted those principal texts, which they bring to support their belief, such as Gen. vi. 5. Rom. iii. 9—23. and Rom. viii. 7, 8. it would do much towards convincing us, without proceeding further, that their sentiment could not be supported by the scriptures. But if these pillar texts should appear to be sound, we might conclude the doctrine would stand, even though we should find some texts, which are less depended upon, misapplied in being brought to support this doctrine.

That part of the Christian system, which treats of a future retribution, is exceedingly important. If men are forming their characters here for eternity, it is important they should know it. If some die in their

sins, and there be no change of character after death, then it is of inconceivable importance, that I should this moment be prepared for heaven ; for another moment's delay may shut the door of mercy upon me for ever ; but if, after death, there be still another probation, though my duty to exercise immediate repentance be as great, yet the consequences of a delay are, by no means, so alarming. It has been the common sentiment of the Christian world, that the scriptures teach us, that a part of the children of Adam will be saved, through Christ, from the miseries of hell, and that a part will be punished *without end*. This commonly received sentiment is, however, disputed by those, who are called Universalists. The Universalists are of two kinds, 1. Those who hold to *no* future punishment ; and 2. Those who hold to future punishment in hell, but to a universal restoration from that state of punishment to a state of eternal blessedness in heaven. It is the latter class of Universalists, which we shall have our eye more particularly upon in the following explanations. We shall now proceed to examine several of their most noted texts.

NO. I.

“ Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.”

Acts iii. 21.

THIS text is taken first, because I suppose that the name

of the sentiment, Universal Restoration, was designed to be taken from the phrase, *Restitution of all things*, which is used in this verse. If the sentiment derived its name from this passage, it is natural to suppose, that this is considered as one of the principal texts to support it.

The Restoration plan supposes, that at the day of judgment, there will still be righteous and wicked; that the righteous will be taken to heaven and the wicked sent to hell, to endure everlasting punishment, that is, as they explain it, punishment to last for ages of ages. After they have endured this everlasting punishment, they are to be restored to the favor of God. Now the text before us, if it prove any thing in favor of a universal salvation, will prove too much to suit this system. If the "restitution of all things" mean the restoration of all men to holiness and happiness, then this text proves that this restoration will take place at the day of judgment. It is granted on all hands, that Christ will come from heaven to earth, at the day of judgment. But this text does as much as to tell us, that he will not leave heaven to visit the earth until the times of restitution of all things; therefore, the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets, is an event cotemporary with the day of judgment. According to this passage, it is evident, that Christ is to be kept or retained in heaven until the very time, when this restitution shall take place; then it must take place as early as the general judgment, else we need not expect to see Christ here on that solemn occasion. If

the system of a universal restoration be built on this text, the idea of sinners being driven from the judgment seat to hell must be given up; but this would give an entire new turn to the Restoration scheme. They have hitherto exerted themselves to explain away the endlessness of the punishment denounced by the Judge, but, if they build their system on this text, they must explain away the whole of the sentence, which denounces any punishment to be endured after the day of judgment.

After showing that this passage does not favor the Restoration scheme, we shall enquire what it does mean. Is not this one important idea contained in these words, That before, and at the day of judgment, all the elect will be gathered in and completely restored to the divine image and favor. These are Christ's people spoken of Psal. cx. 3.—these are his seed mentioned by Isaiah in the 53d chapter of his prophecy. The prophets never spoke of the Messiah as restoring men from the place of the damned to the place of the blessed, and they never spoke of his restoring all men in this world to holiness and happiness, but that *his people* should become willing; that he should see the travail of his soul.—The prophets foretold that among those who slept in the dust of the earth, some should awake to life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt; therefore a restitution of all things, which was spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets, doth not mean a restoration of all men to the favor of God. All things at the day of judgment may be restored, which they

said would be restored, and yet many be left in a state of impenitence and wrath.

Another idea communicated by the restitution of all things, at the day of judgment, may be this, That things will all then be restored to order—things will not go on any longer in that mixed, and apparently, jumbled state as they now do; but then every creature will have his proper place assigned him, and there he will be kept. The righteous will all be admitted to heaven, and sinful angels and impenitent men will be confined in that eternal prison, which divine justice has prepared for the wicked. When a rebellion is effectually quelled, tho' the rebellious hearts of many of the insurgents are not subdued, things are nevertheless said to be restored to order. If there is not a single rebel left in power, but every one is either allured by mercy, or conquered by the strong hand of government, and either taken out of the way by execution, or bound by chains, which cannot be shaken off, we may say concerning this kingdom, or state, all things are now reduced to the state they were in before the rebellion took place. The laws are as much respected now as before; the powers that be, are as much revered, and the virtuous and obedient are no more liable to be molested by the sons of Belial, than they were before the existence of the rebellion.

The rebellion which has arisen in Jehovah's dominion, will be effectually quelled at the day of judgment, though the hearts of many rebels will still remain opposed to God. The perfect and eternal peace of the holy part of God's kingdom will be

secure. The strong hand of divine justice will subdue the rebels—they will never again be able to rise. Let us take heed, that we be not then found among the enemies of the Lord!

“Now like a lion shall my vengeance
tear
Thy bleeding heart, and no deliverer
near.”

NO. II.

“The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.”

1 Cor. xv. 26.

TO understand this passage, we must know in what sense the word *death* is here used. Death is commonly used in the scriptures to signify one or the other of these three things, 1. A cessation of animal life, which we term *natural death*: 2. It is used as synonymous with sin, Rom. vii. 24, and elsewhere. This we call *spiritual death*: 3. Death is used to signify any misery, whether it be endured in the present or future state. Present evil is called death, Exod. x. 17. Future misery is called death, Rom. vi. 23. This, when it respects the future world, is termed *eternal death*. Now if we can understand in which of these senses the word *death* is used in the passage under consideration, it will probably not be difficult to understand the meaning of the whole passage.

As this is not a detached passage, like a proverb, but stands in the midst of a chapter, which is all of it a connected chain of reasoning, on one particular doctrine of the Christian religion, the meaning of the word *death* may probably be learned from the context. The words *death*, *die* and *dead* are used more than

twenty times in this chapter besides in the verse now before us ; and in every one of these other places *natural* death, or the death of the body is most evidently intended. Christ *died* for our sins, ver. 3. Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the *dead*, how say some among you, that there is no resurrection of the *dead* : But if there be no resurrection of the *dead*, &c. ver. 12, 13. It is evident that Christ's resurrection from the dead means from among those who were literally dead, i. e. from a state of natural death. It is also evident, that the word *dead*, which occurs twice more in the 12th and 13th verses, intends those who are in their graves. In the 15th, 16th, 20th, 21st, and 22d verses the words *dead*, *death* and *die* are most evidently used in exactly the same sense as before ; the same subject is continued. These, I believe, are all the places, where death is spoken of in this chapter, until we come to the text under consideration. This we will pass for the present, and try to find how the word is used in the rest of the chapter. In the 29th verse, the word *dead* occurs three times, and though the sense of this verse is rather obscure ; yet the meaning of *dead* is pretty clearly determined by this clause, "If the dead rise not." The apostle in the 31st verse says, "I die daily." Tho' *die* here does not mean the actual cessation of natural life, still he has his eye upon natural death, and would be understood to say, that in standing for the defence of the gospel, I do as it were undergo a kind of daily dying—I am beaten, I am imprisoned, I am stoned, I am called to fight with beasts. *Die* here

does not mean spiritual dying, nor future misery. The reader will find the word *die*, or *death*, or *dead* occur in the 32, 35, 36, 42, 52, 54, 55, and 56th verses. And I am persuaded, that a mere glance of the eye on these verses will convince him that they refer to the death of the body, and that alone.

It is very evident that natural death is intended, by the way in which it is connected with the grave, ver. 55, O *death* where is thy sting ? O *grave* where is thy victory ? Now, we know that the death, which prepares us to be lodged in the grave, is the death of the body. If the word *death* is used in the same sense through this chapter (as it manifestly is) the 56th verse makes it clear that it is not *sin* or spiritual death, which is intended ; for here it is said, "The sting of *death* is *sin*." Sin, we know, is the thing which makes us afraid to die. If death in this passage be used synonymously with sin it would make no sense at all.

Can it now remain a doubt in our minds what is the true meaning of the word *death*, in the passage before us ? It would be strange indeed, if the apostle should in the middle of such a connected discourse, where he has occasion to use this word so frequently, make use of it in quite a different sense, without giving us any intimation of it, or any thing, whereby we could find out that he had used it differently from what he did in the rest of the discourse.

When the apostle declares, "the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death," he means that kind of death, which has dominion over the bodies of the

saints and now holds them prisoners in the grave, which is his prison house. Death is personified, i. e. treated of as though a living person. It is addressed, ver. 55, as though it were a person; "O death where is thy sting?" It is here called an enemy. But why? Is not death put in the list of the Christian's privileges? 1 Cor. iii. 22. And did not this same apostle, at another time, say, "to die is gain?" It is true, that a Christian is far happier after death than he is in this sinning world; but he is not so happy now as he will be at the resurrection of the just, when his body will be raised up all refined, and will appear glorious like Christ's body. The prophets and apostles and saints, who are in heaven, are now perfectly holy, but the resurrection will greatly advance them in glory and blessedness. Death is therefore considered as their enemy, because it keeps them, at present, from their most perfect and happy state.

Why is death called the *last* enemy? Because all the other enemies of God's people are overcome before this. The conquest of sin is begun in regeneration, carried on by sanctification, and completed at the moment of death, when the soul is separated from the body. Spiritual death in the saints is conquered, when natural death conquers them. Then the world and the devil are for ever vanquished. There is nothing now remains to interrupt their most perfect blessedness, except the dominion which death has over their bodies. This then must be the *last* enemy, since they have long before gotten the victory over every other foe. It be-

ing called the last enemy is enough to determine what kind of death is meant. Eternal death God's children never suffer; spiritual death they are completely delivered from (that is most of them) long before the day of judgment; but natural death, like a mighty conqueror, mows them all down, and imprisons their bodies in the grave. But in the morning of the resurrection, when the trump of God shall sound, this mighty conqueror will be conquered—at once, in the twinkling of an eye, he must resign all his prisoners, without a hope of ever regaining them: for then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

After the resurrection and the day of judgment, the church of Christ will be in its triumphant state; placed out of the reach of all its enemies. Though devils remain, and will always retain their sinful temper, still they cannot molest the children of God; for they will be confined to their prison; where also wicked men will be bound hand and foot, unable any more to give vent to their malice, so as to distress the lambs of Christ. The time, when this last enemy is to be destroyed, is manifestly the day of judgment, Christ's second coming—see ver. 23, "Afterward they that are Christ's *at his coming*." This is the time when the last enemy is to be destroyed.

This passage being, as I hope, fairly and intelligibly explained, I shall be borne with, if I add several remarks, which are suggested by the foregoing explanation.

Remark 1. The only way in

which this text ever came to be pressed into the service of the Universalists is the misapprehending the meaning of the word *death*. They have considered it as signifying either sin, (spiritual death) or future misery, which is called eternal death. If death in this passage does not mean either of these, then I do not see how this text helps their cause. We believe in a universal destruction of natural death, and yet we believe that some will awake to shame and everlasting contempt.

Remark 2. The way which this mistake, about the last enemy death, has arisen, is by not comparing the text with the context ; and this is a very fruitful source of mistakes. If we compare this text with the chapter, it fixes the meaning of *death*, beyond a doubt, to be *natural* death. But when a favorite point is to be established, then a mere word, or sound is caught at, without honestly seeking for its true meaning. It is well known that language is so barren, that words, not only of the same sound, but written with the same letters, are made use of to signify quite different things. In general, there is not much difficulty to determine in what sense any accurate speaker or writer uses his words, if we will but carefully attend to *all* that he speaks or writes, and take it in connection. It is probable that when Christ said, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again," he pointed to his body, or introduced the words in such a connection, that those who candidly attended might have understood him to mean not Solomon's temple, but the temple of his body. The words *all*, *whole*,

&c. are sometimes evidently used in a limited sense. It is always candid to attend to the scope of an author, to determine in what sense he uses words. By not attending to this, we shall often do the greatest injustice to an author. I do not know that Doctor Watts was ever considered as a universalist ; yet one disposed to be uncandid, and to catch at a word might infer his favoring such sentiments from reading this verse in one of his psalms ;

"Cheerful they walk with growing strength,
"Till *all* shall meet in heaven at length ;
"Till *all* before thy face appear,
"And join in nobler worship there."

Do you not see, might this uncandid person say, do you not see, that Doctor Watts held to a general restoration ? Has he not, in one stanza, twice expressed this sentiment, as plain as language could do it ?—has he not said *all* will appear before God's face, and that *all* will appear in heaven *at length* ? This appears plausible—this looks a good deal like proving Doctor Watts a universalist ; but by only casting our eye back on the preceding stanza, we can see that Doctor Watts may still hold concerning the way of the wicked,

"And down it leads to endless pain :"
for there we find something to limit *all* in the stanza quoted.

"Elest are the men, whose hearts are set
"To find the way to Zion's gate ;
"God is their strength, and through the road,
"They lean upon their helper God."

When in the next verse, he comes to speak of *all* meeting in

heaven at length, it is perfectly easy, if we will exercise a grain of candor, to understand, that he means all those men, whose hearts are set to find the way to Zion's gate.

Such want of candor they are guilty of, who would attempt to prove from 1. Cor. iv, 5. "And then shall *every* man have praise of God," that every man living will meet the approbation of his Judge. The connection leads us to this idea, that all who are Christ's, who build on this foundation will be rewarded of God, let men say and think as they will of them.

Remark 3. With this subject before us, I would remark upon what is sometimes said concerning certain errors, That though they do not believe them to be true; yet they acknowledge, their advocates have a good deal of scripture on their side. This is as much as to say, either that the Bible is not the word of God, or that the God of truth bears witness on both sides, in favor of the truth and also in favor of error which is its opposite. If God be true, and the Bible his book, we may rest assured, there is not a single word in it in favor of an *error*. The testimony of the Holy One is all on one side, and that the side of truth and holiness. Therefore let no one say, I believe that is not a true doctrine, but there is a good deal of scripture in favor of it. There may be a good deal of scripture, which is brought to prove an untruth, but let it be scanned, and it will not bear the light—let it be examined in its connection, like the passage just now explained, and it will be seen, that its advocates have made it speak some-

thing, which God never designed.

This 15th chapter of Corinthians is considered as containing much, which favors universalism; but there is nothing which really favors it, only let the true design of the apostle be looked at. The 22d verse of this chapter is one of the most noted texts which the universalists bring to support their sentiment. These are the words; "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Since this passage is introduced, suffer me to observe, 1. That *die* here means natural death, and of course *made alive*, which is its opposite, means the literal resurrection. In the verse which immediately precedes this, it is said; "for since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." And it is evident, that "*made alive*," in this verse means the same as resurrection of the dead in the preceding one. The verse which follows also determines the time when they who are in Christ, are to be made alive, viz. at Christ's *coming*. The saints are regenerated and sanctified and, in this sense *made alive* before Christ comes to judgment. Besides, we notice that Christ himself is the *first fruits* of this being made alive, spoken of by the apostle. Christ never rose from the death of sin; but it was necessary that he should suffer and that he should be the first, that should rise from the dead. And the whole scope of the chapter is manifestly to prove a literal resurrection. We all believe in a universal resurrection, both of the just and of the unjust; a resurrection to life and a resurrection to damnation. But we would

observe, 2. That if we take this verse in connection with the context, it is evident, that the resurrection of *believers alone* is spoken of. Let us look at the passage, which goes before and follows after this noted text : Ver. 18. Then *they which are fallen asleep in Christ* are perished : Ver. 19. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, *we* (i. e. we Christians) are of all men most miserable : Ver. 23. But every man in his own order ; Christ the first fruits, afterward *they that are Christ's* at his coming. The verses before and after seem to determine this to be the meaning of the 22d verse. As in Adam all his children become mortal and die ; so in Christ all his believing children will be raised up at the last day. "They that are Christ's," in the next verse, is evidently designed to limit the *all*, of whom it is here said, that they shall be made alive. If we will but use a little patience in the examination of a difficult text, and a little candor, we shall commonly be able to see, that the scripture is all consistent with itself—that it is not that house divided against itself, which cannot stand. May God guide our minds into the knowledge of the truth, and establish our hearts in the love of it, that we may not be given up to believe a lie, and so be damned, because we received not the love of the truth, that we might be saved !

NO. III.

"And I saw a new heaven, and a new earth ; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away ; and there was no more sea. And I John saw

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the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes ; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain : for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne, said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write : for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end : I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

Revel. xxi. 1—7.

THOSE, who espouse the system of Dr. Chauncey and Mr. Winchester, think this passage holds forth a universal restoration, because it speaks of a new heaven and a new earth, and *all things* being made *new* ; and because it declares that God shall wipe away *all tears*, and that there shall be *no more death*, neither sorrow, nor crying, nor *any more pain* : for the former things are passed away.

It is evident this passage describes the perfect blessedness of *God's kingdom*, and not the blessedness of *all God's crea-*

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tures : For as soon as this passage closes, we have a description of the misery of God's enemies. The passage introduced closes with the 7th verse, and the 8th verse describes the misery of those who are not admitted into heaven, *But the fearful and unbelieving and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone which is the second death.*

This cannot be a description of the misery of the wicked previous to their restoration, and that above be a description of their restoration and the glory which shall follow : for the description of the miserable is separated from the description of the blessed by the disjunctive particle *but*. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, &c." "*But the fearful and unbelieving, &c. shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.*" "He that believeth shall be saved." Here is nothing said about any thing but salvation ; but it would be wrong to conclude thence, that there is no such thing as damnation : for by reading the other clause of the sentence, we find it written, "*but he that believeth not shall be damned.*" This passage in the 21st chapter of Revelation, is similar to the one in Mark just referred to. In both, there is a description first of the character of the Christian and his reward ; and secondly of the character of the unbeliever and his fearful doom. And in both cases, the character and punishment of the unbeliever is separated from the character and bles-

sedness of the believer by the word *but*. They who do not know enough of grammar to know a conjunction from a noun, still know that if a man, who has two sons should say to the elder, Because you have been obedient to your father, I give you all my estate, *but* as for you (addressing himself to the younger) because of your continued disobedience and obstinacy, I entirely disinherit you ; I say the unlearned man would understand that this *but*, put in between the character and lot of the two sons did not imply that the two sons were to be treated alike, but on the contrary, that all the good promised was confined to the elder son. Should such an unlettered man be asked, whether he thought the younger son could claim half the inheritance from the promise of the father, he would answer, By no means ; if the father stands to his word, the younger son will have no share in his estate.

Heaven and hell are both described in this chapter. In the seven first verses heaven is described ; and it is described as being all happiness without any misery, all pleasure without any pain. And this is, no doubt, true of that blessed place, where Christ will for ever dwell with his redeemed family. Hell is represented as a place, where all sorts of impenitent sinners are punished in a burning lake. Here is torment without any ease. After the description of these two different states, there is not a word intimated, as though either of them would ever come to an end.

The future happiness, which is spoken of in the passage now under consideration, is evidently

confined to those who are possessed of a holy conformity to God. The water of life is promised only to *him that is athirst*. And it is only to *him who overcometh*, that God has promised all things, and to be his God. Here the *character* to be rewarded is brought into view. It is only men of this character, from whose eyes all tears will be wiped, and from whom all pain will be for ever removed.

I do not see how any thing can be gathered from the phrase "a new heaven and a new earth" to support the Restoration system. The first place in the Bible where we find this phrase is the 65th chapter of Isaiah. An examination of that place may reflect light on this. "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be you glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for behold I create Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people a joy." Any one, who has paid but little attention to the language of scripture, knows that Jerusalem is one of the names of Christ's church. The creation of the world is called creating the heavens and the earth. It is natural, that the redemption of the church should be spoken of, as a *new creation*; and as the first creation was called heavens and earth, so that the new creation should be called *new heavens* and a *new earth*. In the Millennium, the church will be brought to its greatest terrestrial perfection, therefore when Jerusalem shall be a rejoicing and her people a joy, the new heavens and the new earth will be, in a more eminent sense, than ever before, created.

But in the heavenly state, the new heavens and the new earth will be completed. Their completion will not consist in the restoration of all fallen creatures to the favor of God, but in the restoration and perfection of an *elect world*. "All the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.—And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day."

Attention to this passage leads to one reflection—it is this,—

The universalists, whether upon Dr. Huntington's or Dr. Chauncey's plan, seem to build their scheme of a universal salvation upon this mistake—*They* make a general application of those promises, which *God* has made, only to those who obey the gospel. They give that which is holy to dogs, when God gives it only to his children.—They do not separate between the precious and the vile; between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not. There are joys unspeakable in heaven; but they are prepared only for those who love God. Let none feel that their heaven is secure, any further than they have evidence that they love God.

On Reconciliation to God.

CAN a real disciple of the blessed Jesus, or even a professed believer in divine revelation, read those memorable words of the inspired Paul, (2 Cor. v. 19, 20,) unimpressed

with the magnitude and importance of their subject? *To wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, BE YE RECONCILED UNTO GOD.*

Astonishing thought! *As tho' God did beseech you by us.* What an expression is this! How amazing, how wonderful the idea! What a mixture of majesty and meekness is here! What condescension! infinitely beyond all comparison,—all human conception! That the great and eternal God, whose wrath we have provoked, and who, by a single volition, might sink us to deserved and eternal death, should yet condescend to propose a treaty of peace with his rebellious creatures, and offer terms of reconciliation;—and not only so, but even to beseech and intreat them to accept, and become reconciled! What an infinite strength of love is manifested in this! What an inexpressible regard to the happiness of moral beings! How unspeakably is the heart of the blessed God engaged in the salvation of sinners! But he speaks, and he acts like himself. His name, and his nature are love. This should melt us into penitence, gratitude, and holy affection. Oh, what guilt, must we, worthless worms of the dust, incur, what condemnation must we deserve, if we can abuse such love, and turn a deaf ear to a beseeching God!

Let us then, in the *first* place, enquire how the blessed God carries on, and accomplishes this

grand treaty of reconciliation with rebellious man.

This we are informed in one comprehensive word. "God was, in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." It is only in Christ that Jehovah is a God of salvation. The sinner's salvation is built upon this, from the foundation to the top-stone. And were it not for the mediation of Christ, it would be utterly and for ever impossible for one of our apostate race to escape the wrath to come. Without a mediator, and such a mediator as Christ, God could no sooner pardon, and receive the sinner into his favor, than he could deny himself, or abdicate his throne. Therefore, it is expressly asserted in his word, that "other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ—there is salvation in none other—no other name given under heaven amongst men, whereby we must be saved." Indeed it is thought, that God could not, (because it would be inconsistent with his perfections) bestow any favors on mankind, in the present life, either spiritual or temporal, but for the mediation of the Son of his love; and that on this ground it is asserted in the scriptures of truth, that Christ "is the Saviour of *all* men, *specially* of them that believe."

The nature, and reality of Christ's atonement are most clearly taught us in the sacred word. Also its absolute necessity in order to the sinner's salvation, is there abundantly inculcated, and, indeed, it is apparent to the eye of enlightened reason. We read, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever be-

lieth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Here is pointed out, the formation of the sinner's hope and trust. Its necessity may be easily inferred. For, if God could save sinners in any other way but by the death of his Son, surely he would not have made this infinite sacrifice. The death of Christ would have been needless. Again, The apostle saith, "when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." This implies, that we had no ability to remove those obstructions that were in the way of mercy, and to procure that salvation to ourselves, for which Christ died. The law of God threatens the sinner with eternal death, and his truth and justice stand bound for the execution of it. If, therefore, this penalty should never be inflicted, the law of God could not be honored, nor his truth and justice vindicated in the sinner's salvation. "But Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." There was an absolute necessity, that the Supreme Ruler of the universe should display the same character in government, which he had expressed in his law; and this induced the necessity of an atonement for the exercise of pardoning mercy to the sinner. God could not, otherwise, have appeared the righteous, holy, and sin-hating God. This was effected in the fullest manner by the death of Christ. It is abundantly taught, that God expressed his wrath against sinners, in the sufferings of his Son in their room and stead.

And it is not only declared that he bare our sins in his own body on the tree, but that the great end to be answered by it, was to manifest the righteousness and justice of God, in pardoning and saving sinners. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God, that God might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." This opens the whole gospel scheme of mercy to view, and exhibits those glorious purposes which God in Christ is effecting by reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto them their trespasses. The foundation of the whole is laid in the atonement of Christ. This is the inexhaustible source, and fountain of mercy. "Of his fulness," saith the evangelist, "have all we received, and grace for grace."

In consequence of the atonement of Christ, the sinner is reprieved—the penalty of the law in its execution suspended, and he placed in a state of probation—a state, in which he may become united to Christ, and a partaker of the special benefits of his redemption. A space of repentance is allowed—all needed temporal benefits bestowed—means instituted and ordered to be used—the word given—the ministry of reconciliation committed to men and the ambassadors of Christ sent forth to publish and proclaim the glad tidings of salvation, that God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself—to exhort sinners to repentance and faith in the blood of Christ, and beseech them, in Christ's stead to become reconciled to God.

In consequence, likewise, of the mediation of Christ, God is pleased to grant the influences of his Holy Spirit to accompany his word—to succeed the means of grace and insure their end, by awakening the attention, convincing the minds, and regenerating the hearts of sinners; by which they are turned from darkness to light, from sin to holiness and from Satan to God. By thus uniting them to Christ, by faith, they become branches in him the true vine—living members of his glorious spiritual body, the church—partakers of the benefits of his righteousness, and joint heirs with him, who is the heir of all things.

Thus it is that God hath laid the foundation of redemption in Christ. And thus God in Christ is carrying on and accomplishing the great purposes of redeeming love, and reconciling the world unto himself, by all the teachings of his word, his Providence, and his Spirit. This is the acceptable year of the Lord. Now is the day of salvation. The heavens are clothed in smiling mercy, and every thing joins to preclaim this truth, that God is propitious to sinners—that he is waiting upon them to be gracious, with long suffering patience, and calling after them, in the most moving and endearing invitations of love and mercy, to return unto him and live. Saying in his word, “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters—come buy wine and milk without money and without price. Whosoever will, let him take of the waters of life freely. As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth. Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?” And

God is also by his ministering servants beseeching them to be reconciled to him; and has appointed a preached gospel, the stated mean of saving them that believe.

Having attended to the ground of reconciliation to God, and the way in which it is effected, we will now enquire,

2. What is implied in being reconciled to God? And the question is answered in the first place *Negatively*. It implies no change or alteration in God. He is invariably, immutably, and eternally the same. He is of one mind.—Reconciliation implies a change in that being of whom it is asserted, towards some other being with whom he was previously disaffected. But there is no such change of affection in the mind of God; and he is never spoken of in scripture as being reconciled to the sinner, but invariably as reconciling the sinner to himself. In the words of the apostle which we have considered, the word is used in this sense in three verses successively—*who hath reconciled us unto himself—reconciling the world, &c.—be ye reconciled unto God*. It is a wrong idea of God that he becomes reconciled to the sinner, when he pardons him, and works faith in his heart. God is immutable, and there is no possibility of this change in him. The redeemed sinner is the object of his eternal electing love. God as really loves the elect sinner before, as after his (the sinner's) reconciliation to him. He loves him as one chosen to be a member of Christ, which is the only way of acceptance.—God loved him from eternity, and the eternal love of God is the cause of his ac-

tual union to Christ, in time. In proof of this point, see Romans ix. 11—14. "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of him that calleth. It was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, *Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.*" See also, that declaration of the Most High, by the prophet Jeremiah. "I have loved thee with an *everlasting* love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." Remember, it is God *in Christ* who reconciles the world unto himself. God, *in Christ*, loved the elect sinner from eternity and it is only *in Christ* that God hath any complacency in the sinner after his conversion. —But,

2. *Positively.* To be reconciled to God implies a great, a thorough and essential change, in the feelings and affections of the sinner; as great as is the difference between variance and reconciliation, hatred and love. It implies that the sinner before he is reconciled is at variance with God, and in the temper of his heart wholly opposed to his character and law; for, if he were not, there would be no propriety in speaking of his becoming reconciled, or exhorting him to it, since he hath that already in which reconciliation consists: for, so far as he is not opposed to God, he is essentially reconciled to him. It is plain, that the command or exhortation is addressed to God's enemies; for reconciliation implies friendship, agreement, and harmony, and their becoming reconciled, is their ceasing to be his ene-

mies, and becoming his real friends. It implies a real conformity of heart to the character of God, and all those duties which arise from the law of their relation to him, both as creatures and as sinners. This principle is very extensive in its nature and exercises, as it hath respect to a great variety of objects, and relative duties; but it is all summed up in one comprehensive term—it is the exercise of true, supreme love to God. This is what is implied, and the whole that is implied in reconciliation to God. The soul thus reconciled, is freely and cheerfully disposed to take his proper place and character, and give God the throne. He is willing that Jehovah should be God, which none others are; and he has such a feeling sense of his own criminality, in being ever opposed to God, and his government, that he sees, and feels and acknowledges how holy and righteous God is in the threatenings of his law, and that he would be perfectly just in making him the monument of his eternal wrath and vengeance. He therefore accepts the punishment of his iniquities, exercises repentance towards God, and submits himself unconditionally into his hands. Again,

He loves the character of the Saviour who hath taken the part of God, in utterly condemning the sinner, and magnifying and honoring the divine law by his obedience unto death. The mediatorial character will appear lovely and glorious in the view of him who is truly reconciled to God; and from the sense which he has of his own character, as a sinner and transgressor of God's holy law, an insolvent

debtor to divine justice, and exposed to and deserving of eternal punishment, he will feel his dependence on sovereign mercy, and put his trust alone in Christ, as his only and all-sufficient Saviour, who is the end of the law for righteousness to all them that believe. Such is the nature, and such the distinguishing exercises of reconciliation to God. Were it proper, in this essay, we might greatly enlarge upon the subject, and trace the operation of this divine principle of love to God, as it extends itself through all the various relations of being. Do this, reader, in thine own meditations, and come to a ready and immediate compliance with the duty of being reconciled to God. This, as I have endeavored to explain, is nothing less than the exercise of supreme love to God. And doth not thine own conscience tell thee, that this is thy immediate and indispensable duty? Only consider what a glorious and good being God is—what infinite obligations thou art under to him! What great things he has done for thy salvation, in giving his Son to die—what means he hath used, and is still using with thee—how long he hath already waited upon thee—what light and advantages thou enjoyest under the glorious dispensation of the gospel, to know thy duty, and comply with his will; and canst thou feel, that thou hast any cloak for thy impenitency, or the least possible color of excuse, why thou shouldst, for another moment, neglect to love God and be reconciled to him! Is not the exhortation perfectly reasonable, and the duty infinitely binding upon thee? Answer these questions

to thine own conscience, as thou must hereafter to thy Judge.

ASAPH.

An evil Heart the source of Infidelity.

IN every age there hath appeared in the hearts of men a natural indisposition to receive the truth. The truth condemns them, and whatever condemns them they endeavor to reject. There can scarcely be found a more remarkable instance of this, than in the conduct of the Jewish rulers in their treatment of Jesus Christ, at the hour of his sufferings. "Likewise also the chief priests mocking, said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others, himself he cannot save. Let Christ the king of Israel, descend now from the cross that we may see and believe."—The chief priests and scribes, who spoke these words were men of education, instructors and judges in their own nation, and accustomed, in other matters, to examine, compare and weigh the strength of evidence; so that their infidelity in this instance, and after all that they had seen, their requiring other evidence that Christ was the Son of God, evidently arose from an indisposition to receive the truth. It proved that when divine restraints were withdrawn and their hearts were rancorously fixed against the truth, no possible degree of evidence was sufficient to silence their cavils, or reconcile them to their duty.

The same heart is now found in men. After the full and complete evidence, which God has

furnished for Christian doctrines and moral duties, they call for more ; and they would do the same, if an angel were to come from heaven, and in their hearing confirm the words of divine revelation.

The question with the chief priests and scribes was, whether or not Jesus Christ was a prophet sent from God ; for if this were allowed, they must acknowledge the truth of the doctrines he taught, and that all his injunctions to duty ought to be obeyed. Their demand was for more evidence—" Let him now descend from the cross that we may see and believe." Let us enquire what evidence these persons had, who still required more ; and if we find it was sufficient to satisfy reasonable and honest men, we must ascribe their infidelity to an evil heart of unbelief, which blinded their understanding, because they hated the truth which reproved them. And if we attend only to a summary of the evidence set before them, we shall be surprised, that they could demand, " Let him descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe."

They were in possession of Moses and the prophets, whom they professed to believe, and it is probable they did believe them, so far as sinful men can receive the pure oracles of God. In these were the promises made to the fathers, of a prophet who should be the Saviour of men. On these promises they relied, and the expectation of the people that the Messiah would come about this time, was so highly raised, that although they rejected Christ, they encouraged every seditious person and pretender to divine authority, of which

there were many. In these writings of Moses and the prophets, almost every thing was foretold literally which related to the birth, life, miracles, doctrines, and sufferings of Christ. His family, the place of his birth, the history of his life, and his griefs as well as his glory were written aforehand, by those prophets whom they accounted true.—It was declared that he should be poor and despicable in the eyes of mankind ; that he should be denied and rejected ; that he should be smitten for our iniquities ; that the chastisement of our peace should be upon him ; that he should go to his sufferings, as a sheep that is dumb before the shearers ; and that he should die for the sins of the people. All these things were foretold, not only typically, but expressly ; so that the very sufferings which they beheld, and his hanging on the cross, which they upbraided, were a principal part of the evidence that he was the Christ of God.

Or if they looked to his moral conduct, how pure ! how chaste ! how humble ! how temperate ! how benevolent ! how disposed to instruct men in the most important duties ! how filled with reverence of God, and love of his law ! In all things how divine !—Neither were his doctrines or manner of teaching less evidential of his mission as a prophet, a priest, and king come from the Lord to bless a guilty and miserable world. In his doctrines he taught the being, the infinite perfections, the law, the providence, the government of God, who was the Father and Lord of all men by creation, and his own Father in the highest sense, as he claimed to

be one with him, and proved his claim by his works.

He taught the nature of moral virtue, as it was never taught by a mere man; the depravity of human nature; the necessity of a new heart and a new life, both for our duty and our happiness; the grace of God in forgiving sin, together with the terms of acceptance, faith, repentance and new obedience; and this obedience he enforced by the solemn consideration of a judgment to come, and a state of eternal rewards. While he held himself up as the Saviour of men, these were the doctrines which he taught and enforced with all authority; doctrines which encourage virtue, reprove sin, and at the same time place the well-being of man on the sovereign grace of God, and his attention to his own duty.—To all this evidence, he added that of such mighty and miraculous works as no other ever wrought. He gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, and life to the dead. While one hour he fed an immense multitude with a basket of loaves and fishes, the next he commanded the evil spirits and they obeyed him. The winds and seas heard his voice, and by directing the laws of nature in their course, he proved himself to be the God of nature; and all these things he did in his own name.

This is but a summary of the heads of evidence which those persons had, that he was a prophet from the Lord and spiritual king of Israel; still they said, Let him descend now from the cross that we may see and believe. If this presumptuous demand had been granted, and the Son of God had by his own pow-

er descended from the cross, which he was abundantly able to do, is there any probability that these sinners would have believed? On a brief review of the evidence they before had resisted, we shall doubtless agree there is no probability, this would have softened their obdurate hearts. It was not want of evidence, but a sinful heart, which held them in unbelief. They disliked the doctrines of Christ, and the duties he required; they could not bear his just reproof, and therefore determined to resist the highest evidence, that he was a teacher sent from God and the Saviour of the world.

And the case is the same with those, who at the present day, pretend to doubt of the essential doctrines, duties and institutions of religion. Either through a dislike of the truth, they will not examine the evidence; or they wilfully determine to reject it, and call for other evidence, which is impracticable in the nature of things, or which would give no additional light if it were granted. They say, we wish for stronger evidence, and that the truth might be made still plainer; little considering, that the darkness is in themselves, in their own sinful hearts, in their opposition to the holy doctrines of God, in their dislike of duty, and their reluctance to part with the pleasures of iniquity. It was the sinfulness of the chief priests and scribes, which made them overlook all the miracles which Christ had wrought in the sight of their whole nation, and call for a new miracle; so it is the sinfulness of modern disbelievers and immoral persons, which makes them overlook a system of past evidence.

which is as perfect as infinite wisdom could form it, and call for new light, new evidence to make things still plainer. If new evidence could be granted, and God were pleased to give it, with the hearts which they now have, something further would be demanded. The difficulty is not from a deficiency of evidence, but from a heart unwilling to receive and obey the truth. Although a sinful heart of unbelief is no excuse for a sinner, it will always make divine things appear obscure to him by hiding their beauty.

So long as men endeavor to disbelieve, and quiet their consciences in disobedience to the gospel, they will continue to say, we need some clearer evidence; and they will mistake the blindness of an evil heart, for a defect in the light that is set before their understanding; still this will not excuse them before an impartial Judge. When we consider the evidence offered to the Jews, we are ready to condemn them for requiring that he should come down from the cross as authority for them to believe. This was demanding an unreasonable sign, and done in a cruel manner.

Those, who now disbelieve, should consider the additional evidence, which hath since arisen for the system of Christian truth and duty, and that as they sin against greater light, they must finally appear more guilty in the sight of the Judge, for crucifying Jesus Christ afresh, and putting him and his doctrines to open shame before the world. The method of salvation through a divine Redeemer by the merits of his blood, and the sanctification of the Spirit, by

the completion of the sacred canon, may now be more distinctly understood than it possibly could have been at the time of Christ's death; both the harmony and the usefulness of the Christian doctrines are more apparent; the mighty working of providence in favor of the church, and the power of the Spirit in converting sinners from the evil of their ways, and supporting his people under their troubles; the fulfilment of the Christian prophecies in every age, and in none more remarkably than the present; together with the preservation and gradual increase of the church in opposition to all the power and art of its opposers, are a volume of evidence for the truth, which hath been increasing from the time of Christ to the present day; and it will continue to increase by the mighty working of divine providence, until the glory of the Lord, and his church shall fill the earth. How inexcusable are those, who, through a distaste to the truth and their own duty, neglect to search whether these things be so! or who, to quiet themselves in unbelief, say, we wish for clearer evidence that we may know our duty.

It is acknowledged that doubts on particular subjects may honestly arise; also, that all truths are not of equal importance; but when we see persons who have been educated in the midst of a Christian land, with the fairest advantages for instruction, questioning the whole scheme of revelation; we may justly impute their doubts to unholiness of heart. They dislike the restraints, they do not love the duties of religion. When any

man finds doubts arising in his mind, concerning the doctrines and duties of religion, let him carefully examine, whether they do not proceed from a disaffection of heart to the truth ; and if he finds this to be in any degree the cause, let him be assured they will not mitigate his sin in the sight of the glorious Judge before whom all must soon appear.

M.

To the Editors of the Connecticut Evangelical Magazine.

GENTLEMEN,

THE following narrative was handed me, some time since, at my request, for publication, if it should be thought proper. I have abbreviated it in some parts, and made some small alteration in the language. It is submitted to your perusal ; and if you judge it may be useful, you will please to give it a place in your entertaining and instructive miscellany. I have made enquiry concerning the subject, and do not learn but that he conducts agreeable to the character of a new creature.

RESPECTED AND DEAR SIR,

IN compliance with your request, I send you some sketches of God's merciful dealings with one of the chief of sinners. I have looked up to the Father of lights, that he would enable me to give a faithful narrative and write what may be for his declarative glory. In this way I would humbly acknowledge the infinite debt I owe to divine mercy, and pray that God would

render this display of his marvellous grace beneficial to others.

I was born on Lord's day morning, July 14, 1754, and on the ensuing Lord's day publicly dedicated by my parents to the holy Trinity in baptism.

I have very little remembrance of what passed in the earlier part of my childhood, but am informed, I was the subject of much sickness and bodily distress. When about four years of age was brought nigh unto death, but through divine mercy, was restored to a tolerable state of health. At nine years of age I left my parents and went to live with a relation, at the distance of seventy miles, with whom I continued near twelve years. While I remained with my parents I received frequent good instructions from my mother, who, I trust, was a pious woman, and believe my mind at that time had a serious turn.

But after leaving my parents I had very little religious instruction. When about 18 years of age, through much solicitation, my kinsman took me to sea with him. Having for years past been allured by what I thought the charms of a sea-faring life, all my thoughts were now employed in becoming a complete seaman. I even looked down on all other characters with indifference. Through the influence of bad company on a heart naturally depraved, I now thought of little else but how to fulfil the desires of the flesh, following the example of those who were older in the school of vice than myself. I was guilty of casting off all fear and restraint, of living without God in the world, in a continual abuse of his mercies, and despising his gracious offers.

of life and salvation through his Son. So totally was I sunk in ignorance, deadness and infidelity as to be wholly regardless of his distinguishing goodness and kind providential care of me, which had been displayed in multiplied instances of sickness, distress and danger. Such was the state of my mind till it pleased God to open my eyes to see my baseness and ingratitude, which covered my face with such shame and confusion that it seemed to me I never should be permitted to look up again. It seemed that my eyes would be everlastingly fixed in that gulf of misery, so justly fitted to the demerits of those who despise the mercies of God. This was by a light from heaven, which surely was above the brightness of the sun, shining into the deepest recesses of my heart, and discovering to my view its exceeding sinfulness.

This was on the 23d of June, 1739. Having been for near three years laboring under severe bodily sickness, and for some weeks past given over by my physician, my disorder baffling the power of medicine administered by the hand of man; it pleased God on this day to open my eyes, to see myself in all my blood and sins, in all the depravity of my nature, in all the horrors of poverty, wretchedness, misery, blindness, and nakedness! Finding myself in this situation, I would if possible have got away from myself. But the more I strove to get rid of these distressing feelings the stronger they grew, and I found myself holden by the cords of my sins. I then began to think the bible was indeed the word of God. These words "They shall

call to the rocks and mountains to fall on them, to hide them from the face of Him who sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb," were very forcibly impressed on my mind.

A little after sunset I retired to rest under the most distressing apprehensions that I should never see another morning—believe I slept very little, but was the whole night under distracting fears, lest the just vengeance of the Almighty should fall upon me. I got up in the morning ashamed to see the light, or any human being. I seemed to myself more vile than the beasts that perish, and even envied a dog, whose situation appeared to me preferable to mine.

This day and the following days, the Spirit of the Lord convinced me of particular sins, causing me to look back on my past life, showing me that the whole had been one continued object of God's goodness and care; and that one continued series of transgressions, iniquities, and sins had been the only returns I had made. From this view of things I considered myself justly condemned by God's holy law, and by my own conscience, which was now awakened to witness against me. So long had I abused mercy that it seemed impossible it should ever be extended to me. I was indeed on the borders of despair.

In this situation of horror and distress, I continued near ten days. Much of the time I was exceedingly hungry, but afraid to ask for food, and when I had it before me, was sometimes afraid to eat; for I saw that every thing came from the hand of God and that I was utterly unworthy the smallest favor. Af-

ter having been near ten days in this condition, one afternoon, I think on the 3d of July, I experienced what has ever since been cause of wonder to me. I seemed to experience immediate transition from darkness to light, from misery to joy, &c.

After this day something of that load of guilt and misery, which had lain so heavy upon me, seemed to be removed. I now began to have a gleam of hope that all was not lost. I remained, however, in much distress and anxiety, till I came to the place of my nativity, having been absent more than twelve years. Having been home eight days, taking up Boston's Four-fold State, which accidentally lay before me, I found something which immediately arrested my attention, and before I had read two pages, was almost convinced that God designed mercy for me, and was now about showing me the way. I continued reading that excellent book, I believe, till bed time, and next day resumed the perusal of it, which I continued to do till I had got through it. Encouraged by this, I began to entertain hopes of finding the only remedy for sin-sick souls.

I began now to read the scriptures with more caution and attention than I ever had been wont to do, and seemed to discover something of their importance. I began now to be encouraged, and to hope in God, and to pray to him in secret, confessing myself utterly unworthy his favor. I saw myself to be justly condemned by his righteous law, and had nothing to plead for my excuse in so long living in sin and unbelief, which I now saw to be the soul-destroying sin, and

inlet to all others. Nor could I plead the merits of Christ, for I was now convicted of sin as an unbeliever, and a stranger to the covenants of promise. I felt the truth of these words of Christ, "No man can come unto me except the Father who hath sent me draw him." I saw that I could do nothing but lie at the feet of sovereign mercy and beg, as a poor soul ready to perish, that God would draw me to his dear Son, and enable me to receive him as he is graciously offered to the chief of sinners.

In this situation I continued for several weeks, in the use of the means which God has graciously appointed. Sometimes, when I found satisfaction from reading the scriptures, praying, &c. and that great part of the load of sin and shame which had lain so heavy upon me was removed; I was ready to conclude that I did believe in the Lord Jesus. At other times I would be alarmed to find my convictions abated, fearing I should wholly lose them, and with them all farther care for securing my everlasting well-being, and return again like the dog to his vomit. But adored be the author and finisher of faith, who was graciously pleased to put such helps into my hands, as that by his blessing my understanding was enlightened to see the excellency and beauty of the way of salvation through his dear Son. I was convinced that nothing short of infinite wisdom and almighty power could ever devise and execute such a plan. I saw that such condescension, mercy and love to man passeth all understanding. Well may the angels desire to look into these mysteries. Yet though the un-

derstanding be enlightened to see the fitness of this plan, it appears to me from what I have experienced in my own case, there is a work of almighty power to be put forth to overcome the will and captivate it to an actual embracing of this salvation. For some weeks after I was brought to acquiesce in the plan, in general, I was kept in a state of doubts and fears. But he who I trust had begun a good work in me was graciously pleased to carry it on, by giving me to see the necessity of an actual application of the Lord Jesus to ourselves, by giving up ourselves to him in an everlasting covenant on the terms of the gospel.— This act I humbly conceive to belong to the very essence of saving faith. To this actual reception of my Lord and my God, the Father of mercies I trust brought me through the instrumentality of Mr. Flavel's sermons, in which he seems to throw the clearest light on the doctrines of grace. On reading in particular his sermon on Christ's solemn call and invitation to sinners to come unto him, it pleased the Lord, by sending powerful conviction into my heart, to show me that all my former doubts and fears were directly against the interest of my soul, and that Satan had in this way been making use of my unbelieving heart to hinder me from coming to him who has most graciously declared, saying, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." After this I was enabled cheerfully to prostrate myself at the throne of grace and give myself up to him, who is called the Lord our righteousness, and re-

ceive him as I trust, with joy and thankfulness, that God should provide such a complete and all-sufficient Saviour.

After thus giving up myself to the Lord Jesus, there seemed to be something yet wanting; I wanted to know assuredly that what I had done was approved of God. For this mercy I sent up many petitions, entreating the Lord that he would give me comfort and assurance in the promises. And as though the richest jewel in heaven was not to be denied such a poor wretch, it pleased the Lord, as I think, to give me this also.

For on Lord's day, May 23, 1790, after having spent the day with an unusual calmness and serenity of mind, in reading the scriptures, and acts of devotion, about half an hour before sunset, as I was walking the room, ere ever I was aware, it seemed to me I was in the midst of GLORY! I looked around me to see if I had been transported from the earth, but finding myself surrounded with the same objects as before; I stood still to consider what it should mean. Looking out of the window, every thing wore a different aspect. The trees being then in bloom, each leaf and blossom appeared to wear a smile of complacency, and speak our Creator's praise. While thus standing in wonder and amazement, Rom. vi. 1, was brought to my mind in such a manner as I never before experienced, being set home as with almighty energy on my soul. *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? While remaining in the same posture, Rom. viii. 15, 16, (For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear;*

but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, father. The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; I was brought to my mind in the same manner. And immediately Eph. i. 13, 14, In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the words of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession unto the praise of his glory.

I stood no longer wondering what it should mean, but seemed convinced by an intuitive knowledge, that it was none other than the Holy Spirit, sealing me to the day of redemption, and filling me with that peace and joy in believing, which passeth all understanding. And lest some should think this was only a sudden flight of imagination, let me tell them this frame and temper continued most of the week in a very great degree, causing me frequently to shed floods of tears for joy, and being overcome with such astonishing grace!

Thus I have endeavored, thro' divine assistance, to give, though in a poor, weak, and incoherent manner, a few instances of the divine compassion towards the chief of sinners. And I do now beseech the Father of mercies, that he would be graciously pleased to cause his blessing to rest upon this attempt to show forth his praise, and proclaim the riches of free grace in Christ Jesus: That he would cause it to be made subservient to the comfort of his children, and the awakening of some of those who

are still going on in trespasses and sins. O God of boundless love and compassion, have pity on such as are so far sunk in ignorance, blindness, and infidelity, as not to discover the infinite obligations they lie under to thee, as their continual preserver and benefactor, and who hast not withheld thine only Son, but deliveredst him up to be crucified and slain, that we rebels should live for ever. Lord, give them hearts susceptible of light and truth; and do thou, who commandedst the light to shine out of darkness, shine into their souls, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; to whom with God the Father, and God the Holy Ghost, be rendered ascriptions of glory and honor, and majesty, and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen.

F. A.

April 15, 1794.

From the Christian Observer.

Remarks on the Nature of Ministerial Faithfulness, drawn from the example of John the Baptist.

CHRISTIANS in general, and the ministers of the gospel in particular, may derive some useful and important hints respecting the nature of ministerial faithfulness, from the account which is given in scripture of the preaching of John the Baptist. He is there characterised as a preacher of repentance; and he unquestionably was very faithful in this duty. He announced, at the same time, the approach of Jesus Christ, from

whence it may be inferred, that the doctrine of repentance ought always to accompany the publication of the glad tidings of salvation.

Repentance is not a popular topic. Nevertheless, a large congregation comes even into the wilderness to listen to John, and to be baptized of him. Does he proceed to flatter those who are there gathered round him? Does he intimate that the duty of repentance, though neglected by others, may be presumed to have been already sufficiently fulfilled by the generality of his audience? Does he inveigh against the absent, and spare his own hearers? "O generation of vipers," said he, "who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come;"—"say not within yourselves we have Abraham to our father;" boast not of your privileges as Jews; bring forth fruits meet for repentance—"for now is the axe laid to the root of the tree. Every tree, therefore, that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire."

The people after this awful warning draw near, and ask, what shall we do then? How does the Baptist reply? What doctrine of the gospel does he urge? Which of its essential truths does he unfold? His answer is, "He that hath two coats let him impart to him that hath none, and he that hath meat let him do likewise."

I have no doubt that the multitude were much disappointed by this reply. Probably many of them came to see some striking exhibition, and to hear some wonderful revelation; many, no doubt, hoped to have their present character approved, their

sect preferred, and the doctrines on which they already dwelt confirmed by the prophet. "Is this, then, all that you have to say to us? Have we been at the pains of travelling thus far into the wilderness, in order merely to be told to part with one of our coats and with half of our meat to our poor neighbors? Is this the gospel? Can such an ordinary teacher be John the true prophet, the forerunner of him who is to be the Saviour of the world?"

"Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you." The publicans were the tax-gatherers of those days, and they were notorious for extortion.

"And the soldiers likewise demanded of him saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages." The Roman soldiers were remarkable for their insubordination. A few of them were placed in each of the conquered provinces, where they committed perpetual acts of violence; and, in order to justify their rapacity, they raised many false accusations against the poor natives, whom it was their duty to protect. The prophet shewed remarkable courage in this last reply. Cæsar would not have dared to administer the same rebuke to a party of soldiers. It would have endangered his throne. But the unarmed Baptist feared the face of no man; and with the same boldness with which he told king Herod that it was not lawful for him to have his broth-

er's wife (a saying for which he was beheaded,) he uttered before the ferocious Roman soldiery those truths which, though every one knew, no one except himself ventured to declare to their face.

The diversity of these answers is a proof that John had considered the several vices of his hearers. Many a rebuke is misplaced, perhaps many a sermon is without effect, on account of its being ill-accommodated to the case of the auditors. There are some who think it is sufficient to preach the gospel in general, or if they touch on repentance, to treat of it in general, without pointing out the particular sins to be repented of. If a certain number of general truths are delivered, God, as they assume, will bless his own word as far as he sees fit; and should no good be done, the failure is accounted for by God's not having been pleased to add his blessing. This may be partly admitted, but it may also happen that care has not been taken rightly to divide the word of truth. The preacher may not have assailed his hearers on that side, on which they might have been attacked with most advantage. He may have been general, when he should have been particular; or he may have been timid, when boldness would have become him; or possibly he may have been bold even to rudeness: he may have been too unmeasured in his words; he may, in his heat, have charged some sin on the conscience more vehemently than the case admitted; and thus instead of condemning others, he may have stood condemned himself as a man who utters that which he

cannot make good. And, indeed, they ill understand both the gospel and their own hearts who have not learnt the importance of paying regard to circumstances of time and place; and who fancy that a zeal, which hurries them on in one strait unaccommodating course, is characteristic of Christianity. Zeal of this sort is soon learnt. It is easy to contend for any doctrines with vehemence, but it is not so easy to bend our humor, and to suit our conversation, to all the variety of cases which come before us; to be mild when we should be mild, and bold when we should be bold; to speak when we should speak, and to be silent when it is more prudent to restrain our tongues. It is far more agreeable to human nature to be always bold, or always timid, or always talkative, or always silent, as our tempers may chance to be. It is also more pleasant to confine ourselves to one doctrine, or to one view of doctrines, than to direct our observations to the precise case of the auditors before us. It is more easy to give one answer to all men, than a separate reply to the several individuals who make their application to us. In the one instance a large acquaintance with human nature, a deep knowledge of our own hearts, a great superiority to prejudice, and a careful attention to the case before us, are requisite; in the other, it is only necessary to be furnished with a few general truths, to have at hand a certain stock of sayings which may be learnt almost even by rote.

The true preacher of the gospel will, especially, direct his aim against the reigning preju-

dice, error, temptation, or sin, whatever it may be. In one circle it will be of one kind, in one of another. The soldier must be attacked on the ground of his insolence, the tax-gatherer for his oppression, and the multitude for their general selfishness; and in this consists, indeed, one of the great difficulties of preaching.

The idle and superficial preacher, on the other hand, has learnt to shine on a particular topic. Some doctrine which he can handle well is always his chosen ground. Say what you will, he returns to this subject. He thinks of no heresy, but that which he has skill to combat. Other errors as pernicious gain ground without being noticed. Sometimes it even happens that these superficial teachers agreeing in this respect with their equally superficial hearers, ascribe to timidity, or to want of light, the procedure which I am recommending, and venture to judge and condemn the minister who has a larger knowledge of human nature and of the gospel. Would not such men have blamed the Baptist on the same ground? Had the soldiers asked them, What shall we do? Would they not have affirmed some doctrinal point, in the preaching of which they conceive all boldness to consist? But was there not more courage in exhorting the soldiers to be content with their wages and to do violence to no man, than in proclaiming to them the most repulsive *general* truth? When John preached *generally* to Herod, the king "heard him gladly;" but when John descended to particulars, and said it is not lawful to have thy brother's wife,

Herod cut off the preacher's head. So it is now, men may, with comparative ease, be bro't to hear any truths, and even to be fond of hearing them; but while the preacher rests in generals, the sinner is not reprov'd. Why have we so many mere hearers who seem to know every truth that is to be known, and yet are nearly as ungoverned in their tempers and as lax in their lives as a great part of the unbelievers? One of the reasons I apprehend to be this, that congregations are too seldom instructed in the nature of their own particular faults. There are few John the Baptists to specify their sins; there are few who like Nathan apply the parable, and say, "Thou art the man."

Let me not, however, be thought to discourage a due proportion of doctrinal preaching, or to undervalue evangelical truths. By no means. This is the very way in which those truths are found to take effect. Would you invite a man to believe in Christ? first convince him of sin. Would you convince him of sin? name then some particular sin, and prove that sin upon him. When broken under a sense of it, he will be more disposed to confess his general iniquity, and to acknowledge, like David, recollecting his act of murder and adultery, "Behold I was born in sin and shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." This is also a mode which private Christians may sometimes advantageously follow in their religious conversation with individuals. When a man is curious about doctrines, reply to his religious questions as John an-

swered those of the publicans and soldiers, by pointing to his own besetting sin. Do not indulge in doctrinal disputation. Enter not the thorny path of controversy. Beware of metaphysical niceties and of deep and abstruse questions. These, indeed, are topics on which he will be glad to enter, and perhaps your skill in such disquisitions may tempt you to accompany him into this field of debate. But remember that all doctrine is ill understood, while the conscience is unfeeling. Prove then his sin upon him, and though you proceed no further, you will send him away prepared for the reception of further truth. Some other person, as I admit, may enter into your labors; but that ought to be a consideration of little moment. There is, indeed, no want of men who are ready to administer the consolations of Christianity, or to become instructors of others in the more high and disputable points.

S. P.

From the Christian Observer.

Reflections on the Nature and Happiness of the Heavenly World.

THE mind of man is naturally impressed with an anxious desire of knowing what will be his future state when he is removed out of this transitory life. We see our friends taken away from us to behold them no more in this world; we know that in a short time we ourselves shall be summoned to depart hence and be no more seen. And no one has yet been per-

mitted to return from that unknown country to satisfy our curiosity, and to answer the numerous questions we should be eager to make concerning its nature and enjoyments. The book of God, indeed, which informs us of every thing that is most necessary for man to know, has partly removed the veil; and though it has not told us enough to satisfy curiosity, it has done what is far more important: it has given us such a representation of the glory of the world to come as, without explaining its precise nature, may serve to elevate our expectations to the highest pitch, kindle our warmest desires, inspire us with fortitude to bear the evils of this transitory life, and dispose us to consider the attainment of heaven as the only object which may justly claim our anxious solicitude and most strenuous endeavors.

But let us consider what those circumstances are which constitute the happiness of heaven.

1. It is the peculiar residence of the Almighty. There will be exhibited open displays of the divine glory. There also will be exhibited the most stupendous acts of divine power; there the mind will be continually astonished, delighted, and elevated by proofs of wisdom, not obscure, or sparing, or dubious, but clear and manifest; and there also will be poured forth in the richest variety and abundance the treasures of divine goodness, without any mixture of alloy or restraint of enjoyment. In the most striking and expressive way will the love of the Father and of Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, be manifested in all its fulness of good. There too

the holiness and purity of the divine nature will shine forth in rays of lustre; not such, indeed, as will scorch the beholder, but rather illuminate him with their splendor, and transform him into the same divine image from glory to glory.

Thus God dwells in heaven by the boundless manifestation of every thing great and glorious and good. Upon this earth, indeed, we see on every side proofs of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness. The endless variety of natural productions ornamented with all the vividness of color and elegance of form; the magnitude of the heavenly bodies, the skill of their arrangement, and swiftness of their motions; the wonderful structure of the human body, and the diversified powers of the human mind: all these and much more proclaim the presence and hand of a master, whose wisdom must be infinite and power uncontrolable. But yet these no otherwise give us an idea of the skill of the great Architect, than the broken columns, the disjointed arches, and the mouldering capitals, of some ruined edifice convey to us an adequate idea of the beauty and grandeur of the original building. We live here in the ruins of a world, once, indeed, fair and good, but now forsaken by its great master, and suffered to fall into decay; and the traces we meet with of greatness and splendor are comparatively few and mean. Here every thing is marked by imperfection. Light is obscured by darkness, truth is debased by error, good is polluted with evil, pleasure is alloyed by pain, health is clouded by sickness, and every enjoyment

is transitory, fading, uncertain. All the good which God here exhibits is equally shared by the wicked and corrupt. His wisdom and power are displayed upon things comparatively of little worth. The leaf of a weed may discover wonderful art; the shell of a contemptible fish may display the richest coloring; the body of the vilest of men may shew astonishing wisdom: yet all these things are only, as it were, the rough sketches of infinite wisdom. They are intended only for a moment. They will soon be burnt up as things of no worth.

I do not pretend to explain, or even to conjecture, in what way the glorious proofs of the divine perfections will be exhibited to us above. It is sufficient for me to know that God will exhibit them; and I see enough of his unsearchable wisdom here below to make me give him full credit for a display glorious, infinitely glorious, above what the eye hath seen or the heart of man can conceive. The infant this moment born into the world may possibly as well conceive the nature of the world in which it finds itself, as man, with all his boasted sagacity, can conceive the nature of the world to come. Let us rest satisfied that it will be a perfect, as well as glorious, display, of every divine attribute: such a display as throughout eternity will excite our gratitude, our admiration, our love, our humility.

2. The inhabitants of heaven are related to God as his people. It was evidently his intention in separating them from the world, to exalt them, to purify them, to deliver them from every evil and imperfection, to make them

partakers of a new and divine nature, to assimilate them to himself, and to glorify and beatify them with himself in a better and purer state. In heaven they will be his people : singled out, as it were, that they may receive the most abundant communication of his grace and mercy ; and that the glory of his goodness, truth, love, and holiness, may be wonderfully displayed in the perfection of their felicity, the purity of their nature, and the completeness of their beatification.

But in order that this relation may subsist in perfection, it is absolutely necessary that a previous conformity in nature should take place between man and God. And such a change does take place. A restoration to the original state of purity in which he was created takes place thro' Christ, who is the resurrection and the life. No longer blinded by ignorance and enslaved by sin, men are enlightened to know the inestimable privileges to which they are called, and the infinite value of the relation in which they stand to God. No guilt causes them to hide themselves from him like Adam.—They love their God whose perfections they now understand ; and they love all his precepts, the excellency of which they can now clearly discover. There the will is rectified ; it coincides with the judgment. The affections are purified ; they will be fixed only upon proper objects. No more will there be a struggle between inclination and duty, between conscience and interest. The relation we shall bear to God will be the matter of our highest exultation ; our most honorable distinction : and

we shall glory in it as our noblest privilege.

3. But let not the Son of God be ever forgotten while we speak or think of heaven. To him we owe every thing. He purchased us by his precious blood. He sought us when we had wandered far from our father's fold. To his loving kindness, patience, and bounty, we owe every hope in time and eternity. He is the bond of union between us and his father. He is the center of the relation which will exist between the redeemed and their God. Behold here the perfect accomplishment of his labors. For this he travailed and suffered death on the cross—that he might thus restore man to God, and reconcile God to men ; that a blessed, holy, and eternal relation might thenceforwards subsist between them ; he in them and they in him, that they all might be one with God, even as Christ is one with the Father.

4. The blessed above are delivered from every evil—freed for ever from pain, from sorrow, from death. In heaven every source of evil will for ever be cut off. The justice of God will be satisfied, and his displeasure against us be for ever forgotten. Our own minds will have become perfectly pure and holy, and therefore no corruptions can ever disturb our tranquillity. And all around us will be partakers of the same holy nature ; so that they will be disposed only to contribute by every means in their power to our peace and happiness. Oh, glorious state ! where envy shall never corrode the breast ; where passion and resentment shall never ruffle the peace of our minds ; where

pride shall never instil a vain conceit of ourselves; where a mean jealousy shall never be harbored in the soul; where ignorance shall never lead us astray, or temptations seduce us from the path of duty. Oh, happy state! in which a pure benevolence shall expand every bosom; in which fervent love shall dictate the performance of every duty; in which you will never see any thing in your neighbor to give you pain or grief. Here, alas! even good men are too often suspicious of each other, and discern such failings and imperfections in themselves and others, as prevent the full exercise of Christian love. But there all shall love their neighbor truly as themselves; and love their God with all their heart, and with all their soul, and with all their strength. Oh, blessed state! in which no fear of danger or apprehension of change shall ever for a moment disturb our tranquillity and joy. Happy state! in which a weak and corrupt body shall no longer be the clog of the soul; in which sickness shall no longer impede us in doing our duty; or death separate us from those we love. Happy state! where no enemies shall alarm, and no voice of threatening or violence shall ever be heard.

See, Christian, what a glorious prize is set before you! You are contending not for an earthly kingdom, but for what is infinitely more valuable, for a crown of glory. Ponder upon the eternal happiness which the redeemed enjoy above, and then say is it not worth all your pains and endeavors to secure such an inheritance? Gird up, therefore, the loins of your mind, and seek for

heaven with an earnestness in some degree proportioned to its excellence. Do you meet with difficulties? Is self-denial required? Consider whether you will not be richly repaid in the end. Do you encounter the frowns or the ridicule of your associates? Think how extreme that folly must be which will give up such a glorious and eternal inheritance, on account of the laugh of a sinful worm of the earth. No, heaven is worth all you can suffer, though your life were required as the purchase: heaven is worth all you can do to obtain it.

And as for you, who have truly repented of your sins, who have truly applied for pardon through Christ, and who manifest the sincerity of your faith by your works: let me exhort you to make your calling and election sure. See that you are well grounded in faith and hope, and be not deceiving yourselves in this matter. Death may come very unexpectedly, and very soon; and it will be a dreadful thing then to be in doubt about your state. You can have no comfort from the consideration of the glory of heaven, till you have first a well founded hope of your having an interest in it.—It is worth a whole world to obtain this; and blessed be God it may be obtained. The promises of God offer it, and the Redeemer we serve will give it to those who faithfully seek it. And let the contemplation of the world to come serve to *wean your affections from every thing here below*, and teach you to *look upon death without fear*.—What, indeed, is death to the real Christian but the beginning of a glorious and immortal life, the joyful day of his release from

prison? Were such views realized they would reconcile you to the death of relations as dear to you as your own souls; for what is there really afflicting in the death of those who sleep in Jesus? They would also teach you to bear properly the evils and troubles of life. Your light tribulations, which are but for a moment, would work out for you a more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Estimate by comparison with the happiness of heaven the pleasures of this vain and transitory life, and see how poor they all are, and how little worth that eager pursuit with which they are sought by many. Finally, let this glorious prospect animate and cheer you whenever you faint or are weary. All this scene of blessedness is ready to open upon you as soon as you put off this mortal life, which may be in a very short time, and cannot be at a very distant period. See then that you are walking worthy of the vocation with which you are called, daily living as those who are expecting and waiting for such a glory ready to be revealed. Remember that here that relation must be begun between you and God, which is only perfected above. There is a difference, rather in degree than in kind, between the employments and the enjoyments of the church below and the church above. See then that you look upon this life as a preparation only for a better, and that having this hope you purify yourselves even as he who hath called you is pure.

But let it be remembered, that the same scriptures which declare to us the happiness of heaven, declare also, with equal clearness and fulness, that no im-

penitent sinner shall be admitted into it. Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived. No fornicator, or adulterer, or unclean person shall have any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ. The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people who forget God. Upon the wicked God will rain snares, fire, brimstone, and a terrible tempest, this shall be their portion; a portion how different from that which we have just been describing!

Now may I not appeal to the consciences of some of my readers on this point: that they have no part or lot in this glorious inheritance of the saints? If the wicked are excluded, they are excluded. If none can enter into the kingdom of God but those that are born of the Spirit of God, they are not born again, as their own consciences bear them witness. If it is necessary that we should possess a true and living faith in order to be united to Christ; they have no such faith, and therefore are not one with Christ and Christ with them. In a word, if the whole current of scripture declares, in the most pointed and express manner, that none are admitted into the kingdom of heaven but such as are previously prepared and fitted for it, by repentance, faith, and holiness; then they stand excluded. Do not say that you are no worse than your neighbors, and that many others are as careless about their souls as you are. It is too true: our Saviour has said the same: "wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are that enter in thereat; and strait is

the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." But while I would alarm you who are impenitent with a sense of your danger, I would also beseech you to reflect that it is not yet too late; though you know not how soon it may be. Blessed be God, the door of mercy is still open. By all the unspeakable joys which I have described, by all the terrors of everlasting destruction, remain not, I intreat you, in a state of sin, or even of doubt, about your salvation. Let not so great and glorious a treasure, as is offered to you, be lost, because you would not accept it. This day, while it is called to-day, reflect seriously upon the world to come. Think of the blessedness of dying in the Lord, and being admitted into heaven; and of the misery of perishing for ever; and may the Lord give you repentance and true conversion.

OURANIUS.

From the Christian Observer.

The Nature and Effects of Christian Courtesy exemplified.

A SHORT time since, I paid a visit to an old friend at his residence in a remote part of the kingdom, whom I had not seen for eighteen years, and I am disposed to think the narrative of the circumstances of that interview, and of the consequences attending it, will not be uninteresting to yourself or your readers.

My acquaintance with Theophilus (for that is the title under which I shall conceal the name

of my friend,) began at the university, which we entered and quitted nearly at the same time; and it was improved into an intimacy by an occasional intercourse of several years. He was sensible, lively, affable, generous, and humane; but with these qualities he had one fault, which often made me tremble for its consequences, an impetuosity of temper, which ill brooked opposition or restraint. In 1785 I left England, under a promise of writing to Theophilus, which I never performed, although I always retained a sincere regard for him. I returned to my native country at the close of the last century, and enquiring after the companion of my youth, I learnt that, in 1787, he had succeeded to a large estate in — shire, and had ever since lived in the country, visiting the metropolis only when called to it by business of importance.

Intending to surprise him by an early visit, I forebore writing to him, but from circumstances which it is unnecessary to particularize, I had no opportunity of executing my intention before the beginning of last September, when, without any previous notice, I repaired to his house. At the distance of three quarters of a mile from it, I passed through a village, which I was informed had been established by Theophilus; the neatness of the cottages, and the appearance of their inhabitants bespoke industry, order, economy, and comfort. My name, as that of a perfect stranger, was announced to him by a servant. I heard it repeated with a vivacity which convinced me that I was not forgotten, and that I should be a welcome visitor: in a moment afterwards

my friend took me by the hand, and his voice confirmed what his countenance expressed, that he was really glad to see me.

We had chatted more than an hour, with all the hilarity and interest which a renewed friendship, after long separation, inspires, when we were most disagreeably interrupted by rude noises at the gate: a servant entering announced the arrival of some clamorous complainants, who required the interposition of my friend as a magistrate. He immediately arose, apologised for the necessity of attending his duty, and was preparing to leave the room, when I requested to accompany him. The parties stated their complaints, which had arisen out of a drunken brawl, with the greatest vehemence, although they were so trifling and ridiculous, that I could not suppress my vexation at the ill timed intrusion. My friend, however, heard them, not merely with patience, but with complacency, and I admired the dexterity with which he soothed and composed the enraged opponents, and the well adapted, impressive admonition with which he discharged, after having reconciled, them. All this was done without any emotion, and with so much good humor, that I could not conceal my surprise. Theophilus, smiling, replied, "You knew me at a time when I should not have borne such a scene with so much composure, but since our separation I have been studying morals and manners in that book, (pointing to one which I saw was a bible;) in that," continuing his discourse with a rising animation in his voice and eyes, "there is a character described,

which no mortal can ever hope to equal, but which I daily study, as a model of unattainable though imitable perfection; a character which combines such dignity and condescension, such sublimity and humility, so much forbearance under affront, such patience under ill usage, such love to God, and such good will to man, evinced by habitual piety and philanthropy, that even men of the world are compelled to admire it, whilst *those to whom it is given to understand it* love and adore it. Imagination never conceived a character so amiable, so elevated." From this and some other expressions I suspected Theophilus had become a *Methodist*, and the morning and evening use of family prayer, with the general tenor of his conversation, so different from what it used to be, tended strongly to confirm the suspicion, although I saw nothing in his behavior or in that of his family, of the cant, precision, and formality attributed to people of that denomination. The suspicion, however, (I now confess it with shame,) abated somewhat of that cordiality which I felt on the first renewal of our intimacy; but an intercourse of a few days completely annihilated it, and my admiration of his character and love of his person hourly increased. His deportment was so invariably courteous and kind, his conversation, though serious, was so free from gloom, so affable and cheerful, his whole demeanor was so graceful and engaging, that I never saw the character of a fine gentleman more strikingly displayed than by him. Decorum, civility, and politeness, we expect, and usually find, in persons of a certain

rank in life ; but in him they appeared the expressions of innate benevolence. His complacency was without effort, the result of principle, the indication of a mind disciplined and composed, and although I knew that his thoughts were frequently occupied by business of urgent importance, which required intense consideration, I never saw him absent or embarrassed in society, or inattentive to conversation, to which, without any appearance of dictating, he often gave an improving and entertaining tone. But nothing struck me more forcibly than his behavior to young people ; he seemed to feel that to be extensively useful to them he must possess their esteem and confidence, and as this was an object which he had constantly in view, he conciliated their attachment by a familiarity which never lessened their respect for him ; he would join them in the hours of recreation, participate their gaiety, and promote their innocent amusements ; and without the repulsive formality of instruction contrived, even at those times, to impress upon their minds useful knowledge and important truths ; and when he assembled them, as he often did, for the express purpose of instruction, it was conveyed in such a mode that they seemed as anxious to receive it as he was willing to impart it. Nor was the society of Theophilus less agreeable to the aged ; the same behavior endeared him to them which conciliated the young : in short, as a master, a landlord, or a member of society, he was equally respected and esteemed by his family, his tenants, and his neighbors, and the influence of his opinions and con-

duct was beneficially felt wherever they were known. The embarrassed applied to him for advice, the distressed for assistance, and the unhappy for consolation, and the sympathy which he felt and exhibited on such occasions gave a grace to his generosity, and a softness to his admonition, which gained the affections, as well as the gratitude, of those whom he relieved. I regretted that I could not see him in the character of a husband and father, but he had lost his wife three years before my visit to him, and the death of his only child had preceded that of its mother.

When I visited Theophilus it was my intention to pass a few days only with him, but I was attracted by the irresistible fascination of his society to prolong my stay. I joined in all the daily devotions of the family at first, rather (I will not disguise the truth) from a motive of conformity than from a sense of religion. But it was impossible to be long in the company of Theophilus without feeling the influence of his character. The union of piety and external elegance is irresistible ; in him they were united, beyond what I ever saw in any man, and it was evident that he had not learned politeness from the fashionable world only, but that it was the expression of principle and feeling combined. The prayers which he used in the family were either those of our church, or compilations from the different services of it, or compositions of our best divines ; and they were uttered by him with so much unfeigned devotion, that it was impossible to hear them often without being affected by them. I

had, in fact, become in love with religion before I knew what it was, for although my mind had not been indurated by the maxims of infidel philosophy, I had never seriously considered the subject of revelation.

Theophilus remarked with pleasure the traces of this alteration, he improved the opportunity afforded him by it, of introducing moral and religious topics of conversation, to which, in the first days of our renewed acquaintance, I should have paid little attention; and he led me insensibly to the perusal of books calculated to enlighten my understanding, and awaken and alarm my apprehensions. Sometimes he would descant on the frivolous or vicious pursuits of the times, expatiate on the misery occasioned by them to individuals, families, and the nation; or contrast the turbulence and anxiety of a life of dissipation with the solid composure of a religious mind, and the dying despair or insensibility of the impenitent sinner, with the serene confidence of the true believer. All this was done with so much judgment, that I felt its effect without perceiving the object of it. To shorten the narrative, I had passed a month with him, when one evening after he had read a discourse to his family, which furnished the subject of our subsequent conversation, he addressed me with an awful, affecting seriousness, and in terms which I shall never forget.

“I love you, Edward, (said he) and I mean to give you a solid proof of my affection. Our friendship began in youth, and was founded on a similarity of dispositions, which led us to the same occupations and amuse-

ments. Let the friendship of our declining years be cemented by the rational desire of promoting the eternal welfare of each other. I now look back to the time when we passed our mornings and evenings together, in follies and pleasures, as a period of delirium; and whilst I tremble at the recollection of the dangers in which we were plunged by it, I adore with unspeakable gratitude the mercy which rescued me from it. To you I am bound to make this confession as an atonement for my criminality, in encouraging by my example and participation the thoughtless dissipation of your younger years. Ignorant of your situation abroad, and unapprised even whether you were living or dead, what pain have I not felt from the recollection of that period, and often have I raised my voice in prayer for you to the God of mercy, that he would look down upon you with compassion, and recal you from the dangerous courses in which you began the career of life. Most devoutly do I thank him, that he has afforded me an opportunity of telling you this myself; most devoutly do I implore him, that under his good providence I may be the means of rescuing my friend from the misery and destruction of sin. Eighteen years, the third part of our lives, have elapsed in absence from each other; they have passed like a dream, and the remainder of our allotted existence, be it more or less, will soon vanish in the same manner, and the question, which we cannot evade, will then be asked, how we have passed our lives? Have we lived to the glory of God or to ourselves? What an alarming question to beings, who

are created for an eternity of happiness or misery, deriving from nature a propensity to evil and aversion from good, with an incapacity in themselves to will or to do any thing pleasing to God ! But the gracious Father of mankind has not placed his children in a state of remediless misery, he has not imposed obligations upon them which cannot be discharged ; and though we cannot save ourselves, he has provided a salvation for us. Peruse the volume of eternal life, which has been given for our information ; there the mystery of the redemption of man, which human imagination could never have conceived, is plainly revealed. Ruined by sin, man must have perished for ever, if the Son of God had not descended from heaven and made atonement for the sins of the world. He has borne the burthen of our iniquities, and the gates of immortality are no longer barred against us. Through faith in him we have access to the mansions of heavenly bliss, for he is the way, and the truth, and the life. But we cannot enter them with the pollutions of carnal desires and appetites, with earthly passions and affections ; our desires must first be spiritualized, our affections sanctified, our natures must undergo a purification, we must become new creature before we are meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light ; for this purpose a sanctifier is no less offered to man than a Redeemer, who sheds his purifying influence upon those who devoutly implore it, in the name of Jesus. Thus redeemed and sanctified what a scene of glory opens to our view. The earth with all

its thrones and potentates, their dignities and splendors, fade before it like the shadows of the night before the rising sun. But it is a theme too vast for mortal tongue, a vision too bright for human eyes."

Here Theophilus paused for a few moments, absorbed in contemplation of the divine wisdom and benevolence displayed in the redemption of man.

"Such (continuing his discourse) is the glorious hope which God in Christ has revealed to us ; it is no fiction of the imagination, but rests upon the immutable promise of the eternal word, by whom the world was made. He calls upon all men to accept it, and prescribes the indispensable conditions of repentance and faith. Believe and be saved ; but faith, let it be remembered, must ever be shewn in love to him evinced by obedience to his commandments—that love which will make the duty of obedience easy and pleasant.

"But the same Jesus has also declared this alarming truth, that there is a state of endless misery for those who reject the gracious offers of God through him ; who refuse to believe in their Saviour. Strive, my dear Edward, to escape it, whilst yet the hour of grace is given to you. The first step towards religion is a deep, humiliating conviction that you are a sinner, and as such, an offence to a holy God, whose eyes are purer than to behold iniquity ; this will lead you to the consideration how you are to escape his wrath, and to the interposing mercy of Christ. May the divine grace impress this conviction deeply on your heart ; implore it in the

name of Jesus ; put up your petitions also for understanding to comprehend the great mystery of redemption through a crucified Saviour, for repentance and faith ; and I will offer up mine that the Holy Spirit may pour down upon you his illumination, and by his sanctifying influence renew you in that righteousness and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord."

The tears fell from his eyes as he concluded, and mine had bedewed my cheeks whilst he was speaking. He strained me to his bosom with an affectionate embrace, and we separated for the night.

I was too much affected by his discourse to enjoy much repose, and although my mind was in some degree prepared for its impression, it excited a variety of ideas which I had never before, or imperfectly, entertained. "If this be true, in what condition am I? Have I not lived without God in the world? a mere conformist to the practice of religion, without any knowledge of its spirit? What would become of my soul, if God this night should require it of me?" Such amongst many others were the reflections which occurred to me. I felt a desire to pray, as well as the necessity of prayer, but I could scarcely utter more than repeated ejaculations. In the morning, though dejected, I was somewhat more composed, and I then confessed my sins to God, and implored his pardon in the name of Christ, with a devotion which I had never before felt. I made no hesitation in communicating all my emotions to Theophilus ; he rejoiced to perceive them, and whilst he endeavored

to relieve my mind from despondency, earnestly inculcated the duty of benefiting by the grace of God, which through his means had been offered to me, as well as the danger of rejecting it.

You will anticipate the conclusion of my narrative : my invaluable friend, who, by the blessing of God, sowed the seed of the word in my heart, never ceased to water it and promote its growth. We daily read the scriptures together, he shewed me the connection between the Old and New Testament, pointed out the most remarkable prophecies which had been completed, particularly those relating to the Messiah ; explained difficult passages, and noticed others as affording important subjects for meditation, and he read the sublime strains of devotion in the scriptures with a rapturous animation that seemed almost inspired.

How different do I now appear to myself from what I was when I entered the house of Theophilus. I look back with horror to many scenes of my life, which I used to retrace with complacency ; and I feel more satisfaction from this contrition than I ever derived from that dissipation in which I formerly thought myself happy. Under a deep and humiliating sense of the iniquities of my past life, I take a delight in spiritual meditations, which, six months ago, I was incapable of conceiving. I look with trembling hope for pardon and redemption, thro' the atonement of a crucified Saviour ; and whilst, in humble dependance on the assistance of divine grace, I endeavor to work out my salvation with fear and

trembling, I feel a joy and peace in believing, unknown before.

Such, Sir, is my present state, for which, by the blessing of God, I am indebted to Theophilus. This narrative, if it have no other effect, will exemplify the great importance of a conformity between external manners and internal rectitude. If, instead of appearing to me as he did, I had found my friend reserved, formal, and precise; if he had not won my esteem by the kindness and urbanity of his deportment; in short if Christianity in him had not appeared as amiable as his profession of it was sincere, though I might have respected his virtues, if I could have discovered them, I should, probably, have left his house after a few days residence in it with the same mind with which I entered it. But I would not be understood, by any thing I have said, to depreciate from the worth of those plain, simple, unpolished characters, who bear the rich jewels of Christian faith and love in an unseemly casket. The religion of Christ is, doubtless, made for the poor and uneducated, as well as for the rich and polite. Its proper effect, however, in all is to produce that genuine politeness of manner which consists in affability, kindness, courtesy, and condescension; and although many are debarred from acquiring the easy and graceful manners, and the external polish of Theophilus, yet the Christian humility and the Christian love, which give to these their intrinsic value, are equally attainable by all who are truly religious, and ought to be uniformly exhibited in their conduct and conversation.

This last week has placed Theophilus in a new point of view. He has been confined to his room for the first time of his life, with a most painful disorder which scarcely allows him sleep or repose. But his temper has suffered no alteration; placid, patient, and submissive, he bears the severity of disease without a murmur, and leaves the event to him with whom are the issues of life and death.—There are intervals in which the fervor of devotion suspends the intensity of pain; and when he expatiates on the ineffable love and mercy of God, as revealed in Jesus, the animation of his countenance bespeaks not only gratitude but all the joy of hope.

You will ask, Sir, what are my feelings on this trying occasion: I know not how to describe the mixed sensations of grief, anxiety, admiration, fear, and affection; they are best expressed by my fervent prayers to God for his recovery. The crowd of anxious enquirers, which surrounds his house, shews how extensively he is beloved; and returning yesterday from the Church, the humid eyes, desponding faces and unsuppressed sighs of his friends and neighbors, who explored my looks with penetrating anxiety, affected my heart in a manner which I cannot describe. He is now somewhat recovered, and we have a fair prospect of his restoration to health. I tremble, however, whilst I write; but would say, Thy will, O God, be done.

ASIATICUS.

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ANECDOTE.

The Robber disarmed by Charity.

A PIOUS Lady of Montpelier, who devoted the greater

part of her property to the relief of objects in distress, one day passing through a little wood, accompanied by her servant, was stopped by a man who presented a pistol to her, demanding her money or her life. The good lady, without being terrified, looked on him with an air of kindness, and said, "Ah! my friend, you must be reduced to great extremity, since you are determined to take a part which both draws on you the wrath of God, and exposes you continually to all the rigors of human justice. I wish I had wherewith to supply your wants, and extricate you from the dangerous situation in which you are; but I have, alas! only eighteen franks, which I had taken for my journey, and I offer you them with all my heart." The highwayman looking upon her attentively, before he would take the money, wished to know who she was; and when she told him,—“Wretch that I am,” said he, throwing himself at her feet, “I have many times experienced your bounty, and have never

been denied relief when I have sought it of you; and I was now upon the point of injuring you! Ah! believe me, my good lady, I did not know you, or I should not have molested you; for though I have given you but too great a proof that I am a robber, yet I am not a monster,—which I must be to injure a person so charitable as you are. Go on then, keep your money, and I will myself escort you out of the wood; and if any one come to attack you, I will defend you, at the hazard of my life.” The lady was exceedingly affected, and endeavored to represent to him his danger, and to urge motives of honor and religion, to induce him to quit so dreadful a way of life, and promising to do more for him another time, she again offered him the eighteen franks; but knowing she wanted them for her journey, he would not accept them; till at last, she prevailed on him to take nine of them, which she threw to him on going out of the wood.

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Donations to the Missionary Society of Connecticut.

July 31.	Widow Bishop, of Norfolk,	\$ 1	19
	Sundry individuals in New Preston Society,		
	Washington,	6	
Aug. 15.	A Friend of Missions	2	
	Do. Do.		98
		<hr/>	
		\$ 9 98	